

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today applauded the Natural Resources Committee's vote to approve the creation of a Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. The measure, which was favorably reported out of Committee by a vote of 23 -12, includes H.R. 713, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Act, which Rep. Slaughter introduced earlier this year.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

MEDIA CONTACT

Frank Benenati

(202) 225-2888

Rep. Slaughter's Niagara Falls Heritage Bill Reaches Final Stages in the House

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today applauded the Natural Resources Committee's vote to approve the creation of a Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. The measure, which was favorably reported out of Committee by a vote of 23 -12, includes H.R. 713, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Act, which Rep. Slaughter introduced earlier this year.

The measure is likely to be on the House floor for a vote in the next few weeks.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Act, which will designate Niagara Falls as a National Heritage Area, is designed to heighten national appreciation for the region, better preserve its natural and historic resources, improve coordination among existing programs at the Falls, expand the local economy, and enhance the quality of life for the people of the Niagara region.

"I am very pleased to see my bill was able to pass through the full Committee today, which now makes us that much closer to having this important measure become a reality," said Rep. Slaughter. "This Niagara Heritage bill will serve as an engine for the revitalization and promotion of our region's natural, historic, and scenic resources and will benefit residents and visitors alike. This is an opportunity we must seize, one that will protect the beautiful natural resources of our region while promoting tourism that is critical to financial growth and job creation."

"More than 15 million people travel to Niagara Falls every year to take in this awe-inspiring natural phenomenon. This legislation will give Niagara Falls the federal resources and highlight its prominent designation as one of only seven world wonders," Rep. Slaughter added.

The Natural Resources Committee today approved H.R. 1483, which would amend the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to extend the authorization for certain national heritage areas. H.R. 713 was attached to H.R. 1483 as an amendment, and the underlying bill passed 23-12.

BACKGROUND

Niagara Falls is a natural wonder that has been a world-renowned tourist destination for more than 200 years. Rich in natural and cultural resources, the Niagara Falls area has significant historical associations with Native Americans, early European exploration, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Underground Railroad.

National Heritage Area designations, awarded by Congress, protect and preserve many of the most unique and highly prized natural resources in the United States. The designation promotes cooperation among preservationists and those involved in community renewal efforts. In Heritage Areas, for and not-for-profit businesses, individuals, and a wide variety of organizations combine their skills and resources for the benefit of their communities.

A National Heritage Area designation will heighten national appreciation for the region, better preserve its natural and historic resources, improve coordination among existing programs at the site, and improve the quality of life and economy of the Niagara region.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will comprise the area stretching from the Western boundary of the Town of Wheatfield to the mouth of the Niagara River, and from the river to Lake Ontario. It will also include the City of Niagara Falls, the Villages of Youngstown and Lewiston, and all land and water lying within these boundaries.

If the measure is enacted into law, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will be managed by a Federal Commission for its first five years in existence before being turned over to a local management entity.

For these reasons, there has been widespread public interest in establishing a National Heritage Area in the Niagara region since 2000, when Western New York leaders met with National Park Service officials to discuss the concept. In 2002, Public Law 107-256, the "Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Study Act," directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the feasibility of establishing a Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. The National Park service began work on the study in May 2003, and interviewed over 30 local stakeholders, state agencies, local communities, historians, tourism interests, and business interests along the Niagara corridor.

The Niagara National Heritage Area Study report, issued in November 2005, found that the Niagara region met the criteria for establishing a National Heritage Area. The majority of public comments on the Study expressed support for a National Heritage Area that included Niagara Falls and a network of thematically related sites, and was initially managed by a limited five-year federal commission. The National Park Service formally recommended this vision for the Niagara NHA on May 26, 2006. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Act would implement the National Park Service's final recommendation.

###